

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
20508**

USTR PRESS RELEASES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE USTR WEBSITE AT WWW.USTR.GOV.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
JUNE 17, 2002**

**CONTACT: 2002-53
RICHARD MILLS
202-395-3230**

USTR Zoellick Opens Seminar with West African Trade Officials
U.S. Supporting Economic Integration, Strengthening Trade Ties with Region

WASHINGTON - U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick today opened a two-day seminar on advancing regional economic integration in the eight-member West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). The seminar, co-sponsored by USTR and the U.S. Agency for International Development, is part of the expanding U.S. trade and economic cooperation relationship with WAEMU and comes on the heels of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement signed between the United States and WAEMU in April.

In opening the seminar today with WAEMU Commission President Moussa Toure, Ambassador Zoellick said, "The United States stands with WAEMU as a partner and friend in the Union's laudable efforts to build a fully integrated market."

"This seminar will strengthen US-WAEMU cooperation on the Doha Development Agenda and build on our shared vision of a vibrant West African Economic and Monetary Union assuming its rightful role in a strong African and global economy," Zoellick added

The seminar is part of the U.S. commitment to provide trade capacity building support to African countries. The agenda includes technical support and strategies 1) to further integrate WAEMU's customs and monetary practices, 2) to promote economic growth and US-WAEMU trade, and 3) to strengthen cooperative work under the Doha Development Agenda.

Participants in the seminar include forty senior officials from the WAEMU Secretariat and member countries and an equal number of U.S. Government officials and technical experts.

Background on WAEMU:

Established by treaty in 1994, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, comprises eight countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Having achieved a customs and monetary union, WAEMU members are now working to develop a full-

fledged economic union by harmonizing investment, competition, government procurement and sectoral policies. In 2001, two-way trade between the United States and the member countries of WAEMU amounted to nearly \$770 million. WAEMU has an estimated GDP of \$24 billion. The WAEMU market includes 71 million consumers in West Africa.

#